(c) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government against them ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) No such incidents have come to the notice of the Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Indian POWs In Pakistani Jails

4174. SHRI ABANI ROY : Will the Ministe of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Indian warders still languishing in Pak jails" as reported in the Statesman dated 16th April, 2000;

(b) if so, whether a large number of Indian prisoners of War (POWs) are languishing in Pakistani jails;

(c) whether Government have contemplated any efforts to get them released from Pakistani jails; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) According to available information, 54 Indian Prisoners of War (POWs) are believed to be in the custody of Pakistan. However, Pakistan has consistently maintained that no Indian POWs are in its custody.

(c) and (d) The matter has been taken up on several occasions with Pakistan at various levels, including that of the Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan from 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issue with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2 member committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing POWs.

The matter was also raised in the official level discussions held with Pakistan on March 5-6,1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian POWs in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh.

Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

Indians imprisoned in Pakistani Jails

† 4175. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL . Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government attention has been drawn towards Roop lal Saharia who has been released recently after imprisonment of more than 25 years in Pakistani jails on the charge of spying;

(b) if so, the number of such Indians who have been imprisoned in Pakistani jails for such long time;

(c) whether Government have deliberated with the Government of Pakistan for their release; and

(d) if so, the outcome of deliberations ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PAN JA): (a) to (d) Shri Roop Lal Saharia, an Indian national, was repatriated to India on 14-4-2000 after being held for more than 25 years in Pakistani custody.

Government is in continuous contact with Pakistan through diplomatic channels for the release and repatriation of all Indian nationals including those held in Pakistani custody over long periods. Government has urged Pakistan to recognise the need to streamline and improve existing procedures relating to consular access and repatriation of each other's nationals held in custody by both countries.

Closing Down of ET&TDC Ltd.

4176. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM : Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to close down Electronics Trade & Technology Development Corporation Ltd.;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) if not, whether Government will consider introduction of Voluntary Retirement Scheme fot its employees ?

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.